

Citi Case Study

Building engaged communities
with LinkedIn Managed Groups



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Vanessa Colella
Managing Director and Head of North America
Marketing, Citi

Encouraging women to connect online

Citi, the global financial services corporation, has long aimed its marketing efforts at women via Women & Co., a service that provides financial content, commentary and community that gets women thinking and talking about personal finance.

“Women are our most influential audience segment – anything we can do to engage with them online helps strengthen their awareness of our brand,” says Linda Descano, CFA®, Managing Director and Head of Digital Partnerships, Content and Social, North America Marketing, Citi; and President and CEO, Women & Co. “After several years of success with Women & Co., we began looking for new ways to deepen this engagement.”

Creating an active, engaged community within LinkedIn was a logical next step, explains Vanessa Colella, Managing Director and Head of North America Marketing for Citi. “Women on LinkedIn are highly motivated when it comes to moving their careers and businesses forward,” Colella says.

Challenge

- Reach professional women in social media setting
- Encourage conversations about business and financial topics
- Increase brand favorability

Solution

- Partner with LinkedIn to launch a Managed Group
- Seed discussions with content from Women & Co. and other outlets
- Reward group members who contribute the best new discussions and comments with LinkedIn Premium subscriptions
- Use polls to encourage feedback and drive commenting
- Use Sponsored InMails to drive group membership

Why LinkedIn?

- Active and engaged audience of professional women
- Group social tools encourage sharing and discussions
- Expert knowledge of growing online communities
- Ability to connect brands with aspirational, goal-minded professionals

Results

- 43,000 group members in just four months
- Highly engaged and active members: 30–50% return weekly
- 2 times the engagement of the average LinkedIn group
- 17,800+ discussion comments

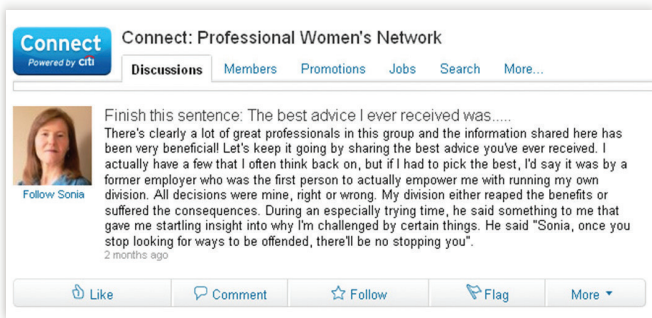
In April 2012, Citi and LinkedIn launched **Connect: Professional Women's Network**, a LinkedIn Managed Group moderated by a LinkedIn community manager. Discussions are user-generated, and are also based on news content, polls, and videos seeded in partnership with Citi and their content teams. News content in groups is also shared with a special edition of LinkedIn Today – the site's news product – called **Special Edition: Professional Women**.

Sustaining engagement with content and rewards

Citi and LinkedIn began by seeding discussions on hot-button topics for professional women, such as how to advance in their careers or deal with difficult co-workers. Citi and LinkedIn created weekly and monthly editorial calendars with regular features like "Solve This Problem" (where members offer answers to a fellow member's professional challenge).

To drive engagement, Citi and LinkedIn focused on ways to encourage lively conversations and interactions among members – for instance, using content from Citi's Women & Co., and encouraging group members to weigh in with their own insights. Citi and LinkedIn also used Sponsored InMails, delivered directly to LinkedIn members' inboxes, to encourage them to join the group.

Group discussions are also driven via thought-provoking polls such as "Why aren't there more women in technology?" (which drew 1,000 votes and more than 100 comments just one week after posting). A June 2012 discussion called "Finish this sentence: the best advice I ever received was ..." has generated more than 2,800 likes and 1,300 comments, and was still an active discussion as of August 2012. Group discussions are also being used by journalists to research trends about women in business.



Connect group members are rewarded for starting popular discussions

To build loyalty and encourage repeat visits to the group, every week LinkedIn and Citi award LinkedIn Premium subscriptions to group members who contribute top new discussions, are top commenters or influencers, or simply post the best comment (as decided by the LinkedIn community manager). For example, in September 2012, a Connect member won an upgraded membership for starting a discussion titled, "Would you be comfortable working for someone young enough to be your son or daughter?"

Connect members have even extended the community-building beyond the online world by organizing their own meetings in person in Washington D.C., New York, Tampa, and several other cities. Descano attended a recent meetup in New York. "What impressed me the most was the strong bond forged among the women, although most had only connected online a few months or even weeks ago," she says. "The sense of trust came through in the candor and openness of what people shared, and the sense of community came through in how others responded."

Community experience drives explosive growth

As of August 2012 – just four months after its launch – the Connect group has 43,000 members and has hosted more than 4,300 discussions with more than 17,000 comments. Members tend to be top-level executives or owners/founders of their businesses. Membership growth was assisted by LinkedIn Sponsored InMails, which delivered an open rate that was twice the LinkedIn average.

The Connect group shows twice as much engagement per member than the average LinkedIn group created in 2012 to date. The group also has the most returning visitors of any LinkedIn group – about one-third to one-half of them visit the group on a weekly basis.

"I've been surprised and delighted to see the quality of discourse happening on Connect, and how many women have gone back again and again to continue conversations," Descano says. "A number of discussions have transitioned to phone and private email – members come to me with specific questions on what they'd like to see next from Citi."

"LinkedIn provides the perfect environment for helping us ignite conversations with women – and judging from the phenomenal growth of the group in just a few months, we're giving them the community experience they've been waiting for," Colella says. "The combination of social sharing tools, fresh and relevant content, and highly professional audience gives Citi new ways to weave our brand into the social fabric of LinkedIn."

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Results stated as of 8/31/2012

